



agriculture & rural development

Department:
agriculture & rural development
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

KZN AIMS TO VACCINATE 70% OF ITS DOG POPULATION IN AN EFFORT TO STAMP OUT THE RABIES OUTBREAK

The KwaZulu-Natal Agriculture and Rural Development MEC, Themba Mthembu, says his Department is pulling out all the stops, including teaming up with the SPCA and other private veterinary services, in a bid to reach and vaccinate 70% of the provinces' dog population in a short period of time.

Mthembu, who was leading a team of vets in a massive vaccination drive in the suburb of Northdale in Pietermaritzburg where a total of 15 000 dogs were targeted, said the current intensified inoculation, education and awareness programme, which includes partnerships, is due to a desperate need to concretise efforts and ensure greater accessibility to vaccines to previously disadvantaged communities.

He indicated however, that the campaign to stamp out rabies in the province is competing against a widening myth, especially in rural communities, that the vaccines kill the hunting instinct and has a contraceptive effect in dogs, which deters some community members from bringing dogs for vaccinations.

"To date, we have lost four lives through dog and cat bites in the province. Three out of those four were children. We are encouraging the public to disregard this misconception and bring their pets to vaccination clinics across the province. A dog or cat bite is fatal. They must not wait until another death happens," he said.

The Department's Chief Director of Veterinary Services, Dr Dumisani Mtshali, said research shows that by vaccinating 70% of the dog population in KwaZulu-Natal, they can eradicate rabies in a short space of time.

"We are currently able to vaccinate between 30-39% of the dog population due to the cases of non-cooperation caused by negligence and myths in the communities. We have a challenge to dispel the myth, reach those lax members of the communities in order to reach 70%," he said.

Mtshali added that while the vaccine can protect the dogs for three years, they have decided that the province-wide vaccination campaign would run annually due to the continued resurgence of rabies cases in the province, that dogs whelp more often and that there is frequent importing of dogs that must also be vaccinated.

The Department has put aside an amount of R6 million for medicinal acquisitions and purchased an additional 22 vehicles for animal health clinics as part of rolling out a massive vaccination programme.

For more information and to RSVP, please liaise with the Director: Media Liaison Officer, Mr Khaye Nkwanyana on 083 952 9723 or khaye.nkwanyana@kzndard.gov.za